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REVIEWS.

Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg : A Translation into Modern English Prose, with Introduction and Notes. By John R. Clark Hall, M. A., Ph. D. Swan Sonnenschein and Co. London, 1901. Pp. xlv, 203.

THIS book should commend itself at once to teachers and students as a useful compendium of Beowulf material. The author aims to present in his introduction 'what is actually known with respect to the poem,' and what seems to him 'most likely to be true amongst the almost innumerable matters of conjecture concerning it.' It will thus be evident that the book is intended to serve as a convenient work of reference rather than to offer entirely new solutions of the many Beowulf problems. Under the heading 'Fact,' Dr. Hall gives a clear and concise account of the history of the MS., of geographical and historical allusions in the poem, and of the little we know about the culture of the period ; under the heading 'Conjecture,' he gives us his own opinions respecting the date and composition of the poem. To this are added a bibliography, a map, twelve valuable illustrations, numerous indexes, and a good translation with notes. Thus the volume makes an excellent supplement to a text-edition of the poem, such as Wyatt's. So much for the book's appeal to the teacher and the elementary student.

Scholars will naturally be attracted to the author's discussion of the more intricate problems of the poem. As regards the composition of the *Beowulf*, Dr. Hall will have nothing of the somewhat fine-spun theories of Ten Brink and Müllenhoff. He believes that the poem was made by an Anglian who had been converted to Christianity, but who had attained to nothing beyond a rudimentary knowledge of its doctrines. Thus Dr. Hall takes issue with Professor Blackburn in the explanation of the Christian coloring in the *Beowulf*. He thinks that there is too large a number of incidental allusions to Christianity to be accounted for by a theory of interpolation, and that all theories of interpolation presuppose infinite pains on the

part of the one who made the changes. For the well known passage at line 175, denouncing heathen rites, Dr. Hall has no adequate explanation, nor does he make quite clear why a man whose allegiance to Christianity was merely perfunctory should have troubled himself to insert any Christian references whatever.

Dr. Hall's views concerning the English authorship of the poem do not differ much from those expressed in Arnold's *Notes on Beowulf*, though he believes that the Scandinavian element was very probably introduced through the Anglian dialect. References to Garmund, Offa, and the Helmings, together with the Mercian forms in the poem, lead him to postulate a Mercian authorship. He thinks that the work may have been written in 660, soon after Penda's death, during the peace and prosperity in Mercia. The latter part of the work, however, he would date twenty years later; for this somewhat baseless opinion no other proof is offered than the vague and unsatisfactory statement that 'the author enters into the feelings of the old so thoroughly that it seems almost certain that he had grown old himself.' (p. xxvi.)

Parts of the introduction and the Bibliography contain errors. I note the following :

Schaldemose's *Beowulf* appeared in 1847, not in 1837.

Müllenhoff's 'Innere Geschichte des Beowulfs' appeared in 1869, not in 1860.

Dr. Davidson contributed nothing to the *Publications of the Modern Language Association* for 1892, nor do we know of any article by him entitled 'The Philosophy [*sic*] of the Stressed Vowels in Beowulf.'

Professor Cook's note on *Beowulf* in *Modern Language Notes* for 1893 begins at column 117, not at 111.

Hoffman's *Beowulf* appeared in 1893.

Several omissions are noted :

Müller's *Mythen im Beowulf*; Sievers, 'Sceaf,' *Paul und Braune* 16. 361. If mention is made of Mr. Frye's article on Beowulf translation, it should be supplemented by other articles which really form with it a series: Gummere, 'On the Translation of Beowulf,' *American Journal of Philology*, 1885; Garnett, *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 6, 3 and 4; and finally Fulton, 'On Translating Anglo-Saxon Poetry,' in the same periodical, 13 (1898). Sharon Turner's discussion of *Beowulf* is certainly of historic interest. It would seem also that Mr. E. H. Jones's paraphrase of the poem for modern readers in Cox and Jones's

Popular Romances of the Middle Ages, London, 1871, and Ragozin's *Siegfried and Beowulf* should have been mentioned.

Dr. Hall's prose rendering of *Beowulf*, based on Wyatt's text, is a very serviceable translation. He has no admiration for the Beowulf dialect of William Morris, with its often meaningless, often ridiculous archaisms, nor does he attempt an imitative measure like Lesslie Hall's, which often seems imitative of nothing at all. Without being too literal, he tries to be accurate, clear, and readable, and it is fair to say that he has in general succeeded. In these respects, however, the second half of the translation is quite inferior to the first. The following passage is especially well done (544-558):

'Thus we two were together on the sea for the space of five nights, till the flood, the tossing seas, the bitter-cold weather, the darkening night, drove us apart, and the fierce north wind turned on us,—rough were the waves. The wrath of the sea-fishes was aroused; then my corslet, hard and hand-locked, furnished me with help against the foes; the woven shirt of mail, adorned with gold, covered my breast. A spotted deadly brute dragged me to the bottom, the grim beast had me fast in his grip; it was granted to me that I might strike the monster with my sword-point, with my fighting weapon; the force of battle carried off the sea beast by my hand.'

If Dr. Hall does not always succeed in giving us a noble simplicity of style, it is because he has deferred too often to his scholar-readers, and has chosen to translate according to the letter rather than the spirit of the poem. It seems to us that he is often faultily literal in the translation of compounds, and that he sometimes suggests too plainly the Old English syntax. The ideal rendering of *Beowulf*, if we ever get it, will evince as much literary art as its archetype; it will cover at once the remoteness, the rapidity, and the strength of its original.

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YALE UNIVERSITY,
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